

Little Fingers Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	EY339104
Inspection date	13/01/2011
Inspector	Sarer Tarling
Setting address	Malt House Farm, Green Street Green Road, DARTFORD, DA2 8DX
Telephone number	01474700047
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Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

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The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

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Description of the setting

Little Fingers Day Nursery was registered in August 2006. Accessibility is good as the nursery operates from a single level purpose built facility in Darenth, Kent. The nursery has sole use of the premises and has a large secure outside play area with a separate section for the under twos. There are five base rooms which are currently organised into a baby unit, a toddler room, a two year and three-year-old room and a pre-school for children from three to five years. The younger age group rooms include their own nappy changing areas while the older children share use of separate male and female toilets.

The nursery is open for 51 weeks of the year, Monday to Friday, from 7.00am to 7.00pm. The nursery serves a wide catchment area and has a very flexible approach towards the hours and sessions that children may do, full day care and sessional places are available. The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register, compulsory and voluntary part of the Childcare Register. A maximum of 86 children under eight years may attend the nursery at any one time. Of these, not more than 71 may be in the early years age group and of these only 27 may be under two. There are currently 82 children on roll including 25 under two's. The nursery provides funded early education for three and four-year-olds and supports a number of children with special educational needs. It has effective procedures in place to enable staff to work with children who speak English as an additional language.

Although supernumerary, the owner of the nursery and manager organise some of their time to spend working alongside staff in the group rooms. Fifteen full and part-time staff are employed and, all but one, have an early years qualification to a level 2 or 3 and some are working toward gaining a higher level.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The nursery is effective in recognising the uniqueness of each child and catering for their individual needs. Caring and positive relationships develop within the safe and generally well organised environment. Effective monitoring systems track children's developmental progress, and staff work with parents to plan their next steps in learning, ensuring steady progress towards the early learning goals. However, minor improvements can still be made in this area. An inclusive self-evaluation process and continual reflective practice has enabled the nursery to implement improvements and to develop a variety of improvement plans which will have a positive impact on the children. This demonstrates that the provider is able to maintain continuous improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- implement an effective system which ensures carpets and soft furnishings throughout the nursery remain clean and hygienic
- improve and vary the provision and presentation of role-play opportunities
- strengthen systems to ensure all staff consistently record how they link observations of children's interests and achievements to the different areas of learning, identify and record individual children's next steps and how activities are differentiated

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The provision for safeguarding is thorough. Robust staff recruitment, vetting and ongoing suitability procedures are in place. An effective induction programme ensures all staff gain a secure knowledge of their roles and responsibilities. The safeguarding policy and procedure meets local Safeguarding Children Board requirements. Staff understand their responsibilities to safeguard children's welfare, what to record and who to report to, should they have any concerns. Designated individuals work well with relevant agencies to protect children. Risk assessments are very well recorded. They identify hazards and show any actions taken to minimise them throughout the nursery. The risk assessments also include preparation required for additional events, such as outings. Staff are vigilant at checking sleeping babies and children are learning how to keep themselves safe in an emergency, should it occur as all children and staff take part in practicing an evacuation procedure.

Management is committed in their drive for improvement. Reflective practice and self evaluation techniques help the nursery to devise realistic and well targeted plans for the future. For example, improvements to the outdoor environment include the addition of an all-weather canopy, more challenging climbing equipment and a vegetable patch where children can learn about sustainability. The nursery welcomes support from the local authorities School Improvement Partner continually striving to improve every aspect of nursery life such as the provision of ethnic fabrics and music in the baby room. Appraisal systems identify the strengths and priorities for individual staff development, providing valuable support in their professional roles. Ongoing training is encouraged, both in-house and externally. As a result, staff's ongoing experience, knowledge and confidence ensure children's welfare; learning and development needs are effectively met. Management seek views of staff, children and parents contributing to the culture of best practice and mutual commitment. Information is shared through staff meetings, informal discussions and important messages are highlighted using a memo system.

Children benefit from the good day-to-day organisation and effective deployment of staff. In general each room is organised to meet the needs of the children attending and the storage of play equipment allows children to make choices for themselves as they become independent learners thus promoting their confidence

and increasing their self-motivation. Soft drapes, a well thought out 'black and white' area in the baby room and an underwater scene help to create an interesting environment. All children and families are valued and appreciated by staff who are proactive in ensuring the nursery environment is inclusive for all. Children have access to a good range of resources which help them learn about the wider world and engage in a range of activities and experiences which help them to value diversity. Due to the fact staff know the children so well, their differing abilities are catered for, meaning all children can develop at the nursery. Staff work with parents of children who speak dual languages to highlight key words in their home language to help give the children an important sense of belonging.

The nursery demonstrates an effective partnership with parents and understands the importance of working with outside professionals in order to promote the well-being of all children. Key policies and procedures, including complaints, are available in a pack and contain all of the necessary information; staff and management are available to discuss these with parents during settling-in visits. Useful information about all aspects of the nursery is shared through various means. Informative notice boards and regular newsletters help to ensure parents are kept up to date with nursery life. Parents are able to see how their children have spent some of their time at the nursery through the well presented displays of children's own craft work such as; 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' and 'Five Little Men in a Flying Saucer'. A small digital screen, in the entrance to the nursery, shows a rolling display of photographs of the children at play. The success of children's development in all areas of learning is being monitored and evaluated. Daily verbal communication keeps parents informed of their children's achievements and well-being. Parents receive detailed information on their child's progress as staff complete the own 'My Unique Story' record. They are encouraged to contribute information and help in the planning of their next steps in learning and development. Parents are made welcome and enjoy occasions such as the Christmas craft morning when they took part in activities alongside their children. Imaginative displays and labeling of children's work enable parents to increase their knowledge and understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage. These methods all help to ensure parents play a key part in their child's learning and parents report that their children are looked after extremely well and are happy with the progress their children are making.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage and, along with the key-person and grouping systems in place, help to support children to achieve good outcomes and make progress towards the early learning goals. Individual care plans are drawn up for each child and include information obtained from parents and carers on their child's starting points. Staff record incidental observations of the children throughout the day and share a contact sheet with parents. Staff listen to feedback from children about their interests and complete a more detailed, focused based, observation every six weeks. These observations are

then used to complete the 'My Unique Story' profile for each child every three months. In turn these are used to inform planning for the next steps in children's learning.

Planning systems ensure activities are linked to children's interests and to identify a balance across the curriculum. However, some staff do not consistently use the system to record information and therefore cannot clearly demonstrate that planning is matched to the full range of children's needs so that each child receives enjoyable and challenging experiences across all areas of learning. The organisation of transition for children through the different age group rooms is excellent. Familiar staff settle children and pass detailed information about individual care plans and where each child is at in their learning in relation to the Early Years Foundation Stage. This system is highly effective as any gaps in the children's achievement records are quickly highlighted and this, along with the staff's enthusiasm, praise and encouragement, help the children make good progress.

Children form very close bonds with adults and other children at the nursery. They confidently go to adults for support or for a cuddle if they feel the need to, showing strong relationships have been built. Staff talk to the children about different feelings, enabling children to feel safe to express their emotions. A cosy den area in the pre-school enables children to find a quiet place where they can reflect and be by themselves. Children's relationships with their peers go from strength-to-strength as they enjoy playing together throughout the day. Children are consistently polite, thoughtful and well behaved; automatically saying sorry to one another if they bump into each other, and show concern if someone is upset. Pictorial prompts of how children should behave when sitting in the book corner, or walking along the corridors, along with clear and consistent boundaries from staff enable children to understand what is expected of them. Staff praise children, noticing only the positives, making children feel good about themselves.

Children are self-assured and feel safe as they understand issues relating to their own and others safety. Staff talk about personal safety, taking risks and the consequences. Young babies separate from their parents with ease, and benefit from close interaction with staff. Each child has access to their own comforter and family photographs. Babies can hold their family photo tube, or crawl after the images of familiar lived ones as it rolls across the floor. Older children talk about home experiences as they leaf through their photo books with staff.

In particular, the baby room environment supports children in using all of their senses to learn about the world around them. They explore natural and man-made items in the sensory baskets, enjoy using musical instruments and reaching for bubbles. Babies like watching themselves in the mirrors and join in by clapping and jiggling along as staff sing familiar rhymes. Photographs and displays around the room show babies enjoy experimenting with paint, sand and splashing water. Older children can explore the natural world; they help care for pets such as stick insects and the recent addition of a summer house has stimulated their interest in birds and insect life. Binoculars and magnifying tools help children view and examine what they have discovered. Staff ensure babies don't miss out by bringing earth and worms inside for them to explore.

Particularly in the pre-school room staff set up areas with consideration to the presentation, making everything look exciting and stimulating to the children. For example when the role-play area is set out as a travel agent children have opportunities to pretend to book holidays using the computer and note pads, posters and brochures show them images from around the world and a display of clocks shows the different times in various countries. Postcards from holidays and days out the children have enjoyed with their families are a good discussion point and show children their experiences are valued. However role play areas are not given as much consideration in other rooms.

Table top activities are changed repeatedly throughout the day offering the children an ever changing environment and ensuring they remain engrossed in their play. This is balanced appropriately as children are also given many opportunities to consolidate their learning by ensuring the same type of activity is offered throughout the week such as; puzzles construction and small world play. There are a range of activities which encourage children's problem solving, reasoning and numeracy skills. Ranging from wire and bead blocks which give the younger children a sense of space and shape to the more systematic matching and number games for the older children.

Children greatly enjoy their time at the nursery. They enjoy sitting in the book areas and take pleasure in looking at books by themselves and listening to favourite stories which are well read by staff. Children actively taking part in their own story telling by using puppets and props from the story sacks. Children have opportunities to speak in small and large groups and do so with a great deal of confidence, expressing themselves in a mature way and indicating that their views are regularly listened to. Independent access to mark-making resources enables children to independently draw or write their name on their own work when they choose. From a young age children learn to use a wide range of tools and equipment safely; for example, they learn to handle cutlery, when using dough children can roll out and use cutters and staff ensure safety scissors are readily available.

Older children enjoy using the computers that are freely accessible. They can use the child-friendly colour coded keyboard and demonstrate excellent mouse control. They help each other to complete the educational games available and are patiently learning to take turns as staff use strategies such as an egg timer to visually show the passing of time and to indicate to children when it is their turn. Children enjoy making a positive contribution to the routine of the day, such as helping to tidy away resources or set the table for lunch.

Staff provide lots of opportunities for children to develop a good understanding of keeping themselves healthy through exercise, healthy eating and good personal hygiene. Reminders are displayed all over the nursery for example, to show children how to wash their hands, or which foods are good for us and those which are not. Parents advise staff of any known dietary allergies, religious or cultural preferences and written menus ensure they are advised of what food is on offer in advance. Meals are healthy and nutritious and offer a wide variety including; tuna pasta, bolognese, casseroles, sweet and sour vegetables and tortilla wraps. Care

plans ensure babies' individual feeding routines are followed. Older children are encouraged to pour their own drinks of water or milk and to help staff prepare their snacks and cut their own fruit. Children learn about oral hygiene as staff use a giant set of teeth and toothbrush to demonstrate how to clean thoroughly. Children are protected from cross-infection as staff generally follow stringent hygiene and cleaning routines. However, some of the carpeting and soft furnishings in the nursery are not as clean as they could be.

Suitable outdoor clothing is provided and ensures children benefit from the fresh air all year round and develop a positive attitude towards being active as the outside area can be used throughout the day. A separate area for the younger children enables them to explore safely on the equipment. Children are able to develop their co-ordination skills as they learn to throw and catch balls, manoeuvre the parachute, dance with ribbons, balance, to see-saw, climb and ride bikes. Parents can sign their children up for sessions with the sports coach who visits weekly. Overall, the outcomes for children are good.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are: Met

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are: Met